

Under the provisions of Section 413.031 of the Texas Workers' Compensation Act, Title 5, Subtitle A of the Texas Labor Code, effective June 17, 2001 and Commission Rule 133.305 titled Medical Dispute Resolution - General and 133.308 titled Medical Dispute Resolution by Independent Review Organizations, the Medical Review Division assigned an IRO to conduct a review of the disputed medical necessity issues between the requestor and the respondent. The dispute was received on 1-29-04.

The Medical Review Division has reviewed the IRO decision and determined that **the requestor prevailed** on the issues of medical necessity. Therefore, upon receipt of this Order and in accordance with §133.308(r)(9), the Commission hereby orders the respondent and non-prevailing party to **refund the requestor \$650** for the paid IRO fee. For the purposes of determining compliance with the order, the Commission will add 20 days to the date the order was deemed received as outlined on page one of this order.

In accordance with §413.031(e), it is a defense for the carrier if the carrier timely complies with the IRO decision.

Based on review of the disputed issues within the request, the Medical Review Division has determined that **medical necessity was the only issue** to be resolved. The office visit, myofascial release, hot/cold pack, ultrasound, therapeutic exercises, paraffin bath, massage, and supplies from 2/5/03 through 2/14/03 were found to be medically necessary. The respondent raised no other reasons for denying reimbursement for the above listed service.

On this basis, and pursuant to §§402.042, 413.016, 413.031, and 413.019 of the Act, the Medical Review Division hereby ORDERS the respondent to pay the unpaid medical fees in accordance with the fair and reasonable rate as set forth in Commission Rule 133.1(a)(8) plus all accrued interest due at the time of payment to the requestor within 20 days of receipt of this order. This Order is applicable to dates of service 2/5/03 through 2/14/03 in this dispute.

The respondent is prohibited from asserting additional denial reasons relative to this Decision upon issuing payment to the requestor in accordance with this Order (Rule 133.307(j)(2)).

This Decision and Order is hereby issued this 7<sup>th</sup> day of October 2004.

Regina L. Cleave  
Medical Dispute Resolution Officer  
Medical Review Division

RLC/rlc

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**NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW DECISION**

September 15, 2004

**Re: IRO Case # M5-04-3246** amended 9/28/04

Texas Worker's Compensation Commission:

Envoy Medical Systems, LP (Envoy) has been certified as an independent review organization (IRO) and has been authorized to perform independent reviews of medical necessity for the Texas Worker's Compensation Commission (TWCC). Texas HB. 2600, Rule 133.308 effective January 1, 2002, allows a claimant or provider who has received an adverse medical necessity determination from a carrier's internal process, to request an independent review by an IRO.

In accordance with the requirement that TWCC assign cases to certified IROs, TWCC assigned this case to Envoy for an independent review. Envoy has performed an independent review of the proposed care to determine if the adverse determination was appropriate. For that purpose, Envoy received relevant medical records, any documents obtained from parties in making the adverse determination, and any other documents and/or written information submitted in support of the appeal.

The case was reviewed by a physician who is Board Certified in Orthopedic Surgery, and who has met the requirements for TWCC Approved Doctor List or has been approved as an exception to the Approved Doctor List. He or she has signed a certification statement attesting that no known conflicts of interest exist between him or her and any of the treating physicians or providers, or any of the physicians or providers who reviewed the case for a determination prior to referral to Envoy for independent review. In addition, the certification statement further attests that the review was performed without bias for or against the carrier, medical provider, or any other party to this case.

The determination of the Envoy reviewer who reviewed this case, based on the medical records provided, is as follows:

Medical Information Reviewed

1. Table of disputed service
2. Explanation of benefits
3. Request for reconsideration
4. OT prescription

5. Occupational therapist notes
6. Hand surgeon's notes

#### History

The patient is a 48-year-old male with bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and who underwent bilateral carpal tunnel releases in 1997. He has had recurrent left symptoms. The treating hand surgeon treated the patient conservatively with a steroid injection, and prior to recommending surgery prescribed a three-week trial of occupational/hand therapy.

The patient was seen for OT evaluation on 2/5/03 and had follow up treatment sessions on 2/7/03, 2/10/03, 2/12/03 and 2/14/03. The patient received nerve gliding exercises, therapeutic exercises and multiple modalities. On 2/14/03 the patient was discharged from occupational therapy and provided with supplies for edema control and pain relief. He subsequently underwent a left carpal tunnel release on 3/27/03, with minimal improvement.

#### Requested Service(s)

Office visit, myofascial release, hot/cold pack, ultrasound, therapeutic exercises, paraffin bath, massage, supplies

#### Decision

I disagree with the carrier's decision to deny the requested services and supplies.

#### Rationale

Three weeks of hand therapy is reasonable prior to considering repeat carpal tunnel release.

The patient had conservative management and a carpal tunnel injection. Conservative options should be exhausted prior to surgery. The short course of occupational therapy provided to the patient was both diagnostic and therapeutic, and there was a reasonable chance it might have prevented surgery.

This medical necessity decision by an Independent Review Organization is deemed to be a Commission decision and order.